



# **The Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

## **DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC UTILITIES**

D.P.U. 09-01

January 7, 2009

Investigation by the Department of Public Utilities on its Own Motion into the Preparation and Response of the Massachusetts Electric Distribution Companies to the December 12, 2008 Winter Storm.

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**VOTE AND ORDER TO OPEN INVESTIGATION**

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Department of Public Utilities (“Department”) hereby opens an investigation into efforts by the state’s electric utilities to prepare for, and restore power following, the winter storm that occurred on December 12, 2008 (“Winter Storm 2008”). The Department will review how the Commonwealth’s four jurisdictional electric distribution companies (“Electric Companies”) prepared for Winter Storm 2008, and their implementation of emergency storm plans.<sup>1</sup> The Department conducts this investigation pursuant to the Department’s general supervisory authority over electric distribution companies, G.L. c. 164, § 76, and the Department’s specific authority to establish service quality standards and review service quality performance by electric and gas companies, G.L. c. 164, § 1E.

The purpose of this investigation is to evaluate the adequacy of the Electric Companies’ storm response/emergency restoration plans, examine each company’s implementation of its plan, and identify improvements to company activities to mitigate the impact of future storm-related outages.

## II. SCOPE OF INVESTIGATION

The Department’s inquiry in this matter will focus on the following topics related to the Electric Companies’ storm preparedness, response, and cooperation: (1) content and adequacy of company storm response/emergency restoration plans; (2) preparation for and management

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<sup>1</sup> The Department is investigating each of the Electric Companies in separate dockets: Fitchburg Gas and Electric Light Company d/b/a Unitil, D.P.U. 09-01-A; National Grid, D.P.U. 09-01-B; NSTAR Electric Company, D.P.U. 09-01-C; and Western Massachusetts Electric Company, D.P.U. 09-01-D.

of the restoration efforts with respect to the service disruptions caused by the Winter Storm 2008; (3) the degree of inter-company cooperation with respect to storm preparation and response, including the sharing of response crews, damage assessment personnel, outage restoration management and oversight personnel, and system infrastructure inventories; (4) procurement and allocation of mutual aid crews from out-of-state; (5) communications with state and local public safety officials; (6) internal company communications; (7) dissemination of information to the public; (8) transmission maintenance and outage scheduling; and (9) identification of company practices that require improvement.

### III. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Each Electric Company is directed to file with the Department by February 23, 2009, a report that includes, but is not limited to the following:

1. Restoration Plans and Assessment
  - (a) Provide copy of active storm/emergency restoration plans
  - (b) Compare activities taken in response to Winter Storm 2008 to the procedures called for in the company's restoration plan
  - (c) Assess performance based on above comparison, identify critical causes and failures, and recommend changes to restoration plans that flow from this analysis
2. Determination of Crew Needs and Allocation of Company Crews, Contractor Crews, Mutual Aid Crews, and Tree Crews
  - (a) Provide copies and/or descriptions of mutual assistance agreements
  - (b) Describe procedure for obtaining mutual aid crews
  - (c) Provide time line of calls to engage mutual aid crews
  - (d) Describe how decisions for crew allocation were made
  - (e) Discuss whether there were delays in crew availability/arrivals
  - (f) Provide crew assignments, by date, location of work, and description of work performed
3. Damage Assessment
  - (a) List all available damage assessment personnel

- (b) Describe timing of damage assessment and provide all supporting documentation
  - (c) Describe procedure and timing for translating damage assessment into crew orders
  - (d) Describe specific damage reported by customers during Winter Storm 2008
  - (e) Describe specific damage to company equipment and other property during Winter Storm 2008
- 4. Describe Outage Tracking and Field Dispatch Coordination
- 5. Prioritization of Outage Repairs
  - (a) Provide list of priority treatment groups (e.g., fire, medical, police, water, sewer)
  - (b) Describe procedure for addressing medical needs/critical customers registration and notification
  - (c) Explain how remaining customers were prioritized
- 6. Call Center Operations During Storms
  - (a) Provide detailed information on calls from customers calling in to report outages, including number of calls received by date, by location and by type of complaint
  - (b) Provide copy of written instructions and/or protocols to call center support personnel (i.e., information on extent of damage, estimation of response time)
  - (c) Describe provisions for receiving and responding to the volume of customer calls
- 7. Describe Communications, Written and Oral, with Municipal Officials and Agencies, Prior to and During the Storm, and Provide Supporting Documentation
- 8. Describe Communications with Customers During Outages
- 9. Provide Vegetation Management Procedures, and Trimming Activities for Transmission and Distribution Lines, by Circuit and Town, Including Maintenance Schedules, for the Last Five Years
- 10. Discuss Grid Reliability Standards Issues and Infrastructure Management, Including Scheduling of Line Maintenance, and Transmission Maintenance Outage Scheduling

11. Identify Company Practices That Require Improvement and Propose Modifications

The Department will review the Electric Company reports. These reports will be made available to the public on the Department's website as soon as practicable after filing at [www.mass.gov/dpu](http://www.mass.gov/dpu).

IV. PROCEDURAL MATTERS AND OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

To provide the opportunity for comment, the Department will hold public hearings within the service territory of each Electric Company. In addition, the Department seeks initial written comments from interested persons in this matter. Attached to this Order is a general notice of public hearing and request for comments. The Department will issue procedural notices for each company's service territory identifying the time and place of the public hearings. The Department's procedural notice will include filing instructions and deadlines for comments from interested persons.

V. ORDER

Accordingly, the Department

VOTES: To open an investigation into the manner in which the Massachusetts electric distribution companies prepared for and responded to the December 12, 2008 winter storm; and it is

ORDERED: That the Secretary of the Department shall publish notice of this investigation in a statewide newspaper of daily circulation within the Commonwealth; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED: That the Secretary of the Department shall serve this Order on Fitchburg Gas and Electric Light Company d/b/a Unitil, National Grid, NSTAR Electric Company, and Western Massachusetts Electric Company; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED: That the Secretary of the Department shall serve a copy of this Order upon all persons on the Department's service list; and it is

FURTHER ORDERED: That Fitchburg Gas and Electric Light Company d/b/a Unitil, National Grid, NSTAR Electric Company, and Western Massachusetts Electric Company shall comply with all directives in this Order.

By Order of the Department,

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Paul J. Hibbard, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
W. Robert Keating, Commissioner

\_\_\_\_\_/s/\_\_\_\_\_  
Tim Woolf, Commissioner